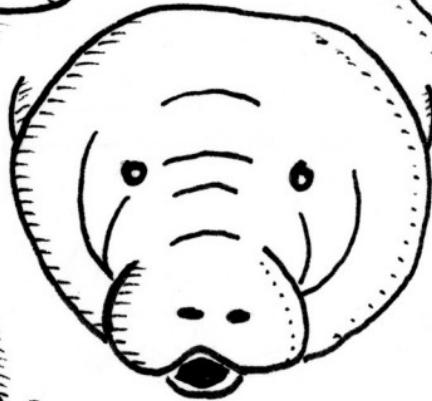


Farm



BY MAX AIRBORNE 2019

by Max Airborne, 2019

I recently lost a best friend.



memories of 6 east
episode 2

The CASCADe of events left me feeling hollow — frozen So ... familiar

by max r



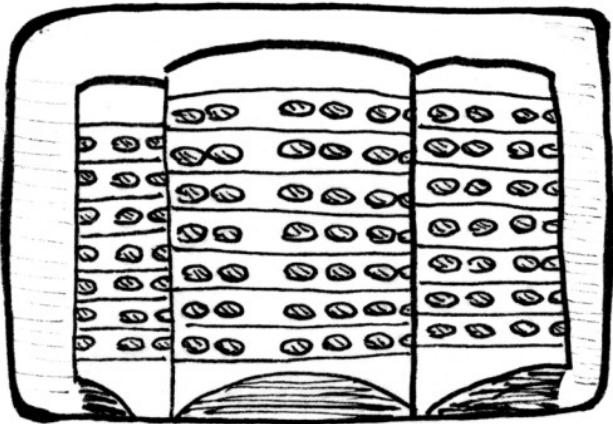
Remember Bic
lighters?
The plastic,
oval ones?



Wayyy back in the day,
before safety regulations
(1979), they were

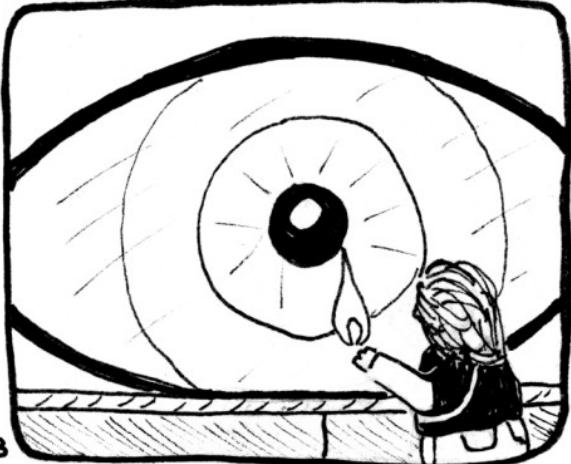
You could
really
TORCH
some shit.



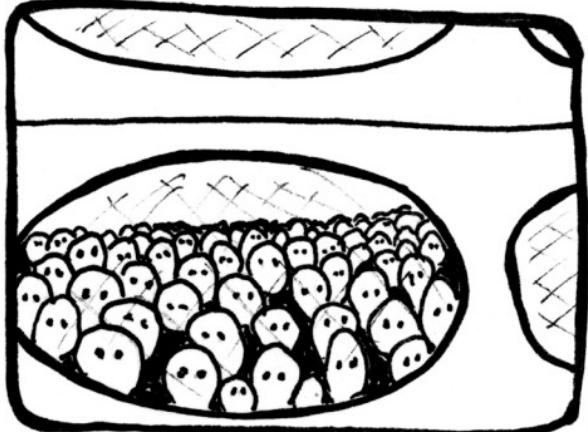


I knew I'd never actually escape through this plastic window. Wouldn't break. Didn't open. One of 1000 perpetually astonished eyes in an endless tubular grid, poking out into the world.

Nevertheless, on the East ward of the 6th floor, in a double room that held two teenagers, I was completely devoted to melting a hole in the window with my Bic.



I was OBSESSED -
could hardly wait for
"quiet time" to resume
torching the same
blackened spot I'd
been at for weeks.



Scratches on the window misted
the view of Lake Michigan.
I imagined an infinite ancestry
of kids who'd been hidden away
in this room, scraping their
contraband tools against this
once-clear surface, fighting
the monster by scratching
out its eyes.

H
E
L
L
O



P
U
N
K
Y

I was intrigued and terrified of my new roommate. Punky was older than me, already in high school. A tough, Chicago city kid.

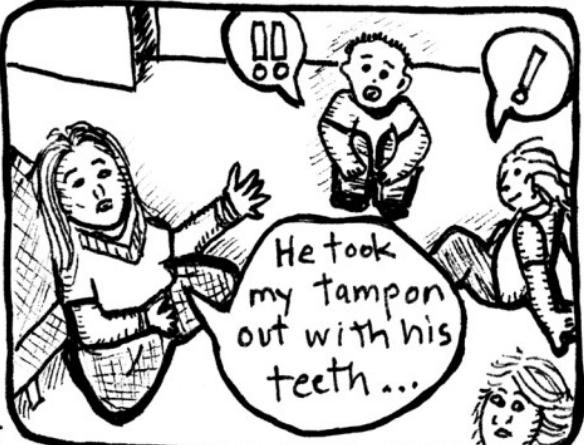
She bragged
about her boyfriend.

SHE WASN'T SHY

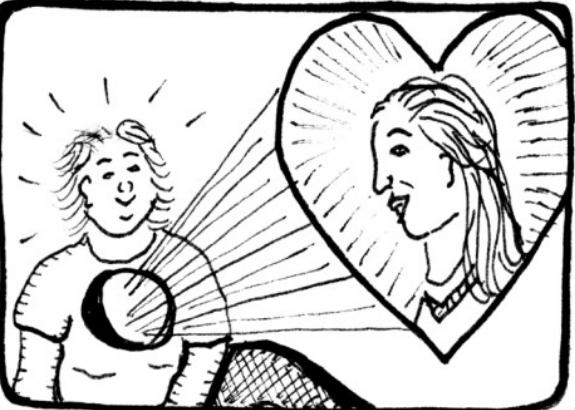
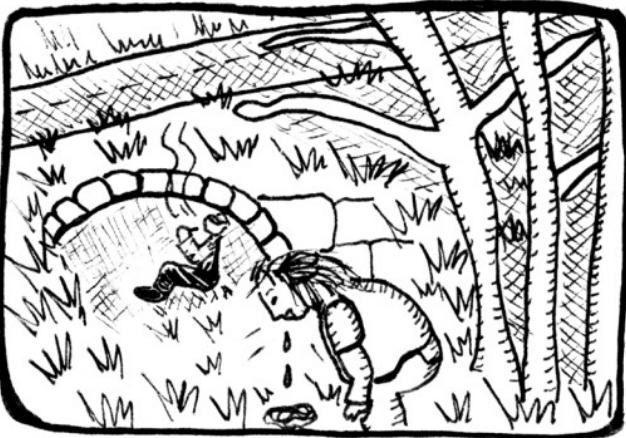
no.

5

He took
my tampon
out with his
teeth...



It didn't sound like the
"SEX" I knew -
mostly blowjobs for icky
boys down by the crick,
the cost of a joint.



I wanted to be
like Punky. Even more,
I WANTED TO BE
LIKED BY HER.

When Punky
asked if I'd ever
DONE IT
with a girl...

...yes

I lied.

There had been the girl I'd fallen in love with at boarding school. We hadn't even kissed, but I had confessed my **love** in a letter, which was partly how I ended up here on this psych ward.



Later that night, Punky put my lie to the test.



...WHAT'S

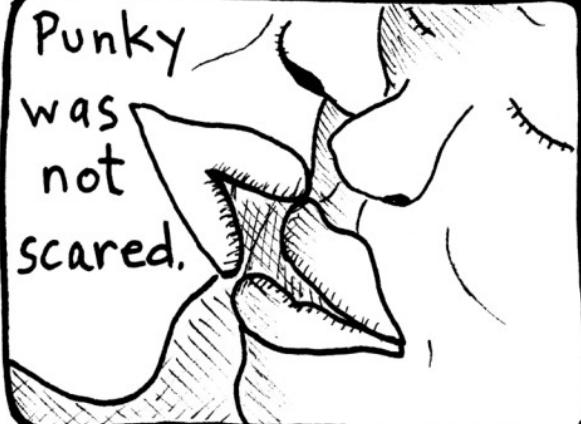


On her bed, nearest the window, her words pounded inside me, echoing against the silence . . .
She moved toward me and I recoiled, blurting out the last thing on earth I wanted to say . . .

8



Punky
was
not
scared.



Challenged to prove
myself,
**We
kissed...**
and kissed...

...Until we heard the
distant knocking of
the night nurse doing
"lights out" rounds.
I quickly retreated
to my own bed.



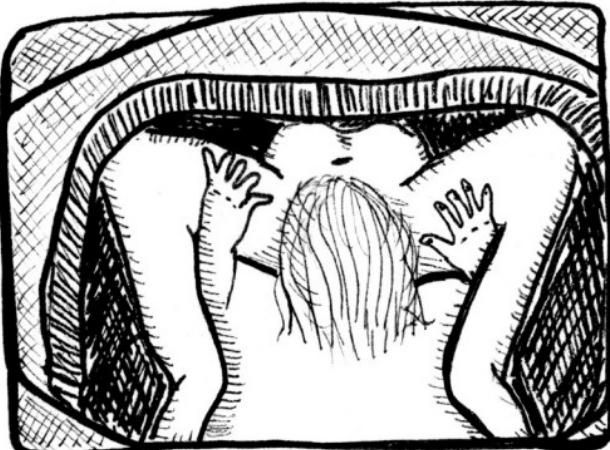
My insides
churned
all
night

WANTING
LIVING
TERRIFIED
CONFUSED
WANTING
WARLING

The next night
after lights out, Punky
came naked to my bed,
wordlessly crawling under
the covers, finding only
anticipation + desire.



Night
after
night
we found
each
other.

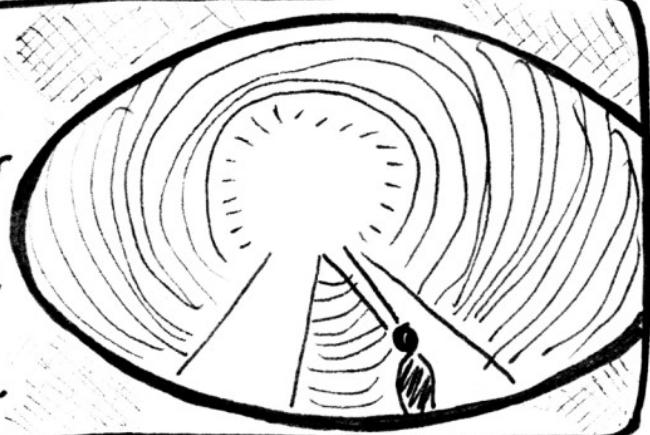


We'd been absorbed in
an illusion of privacy
under the blanket.

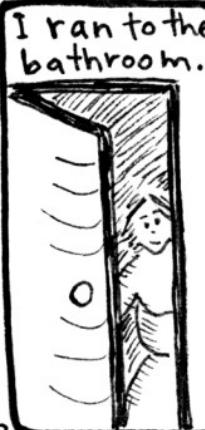
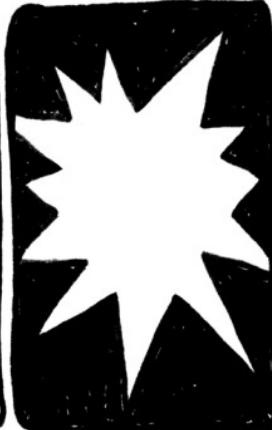
—
The night nurse tried
to piece together
what was happening

I could see the flashlight moving around the room... my empty bed... us under Punky's covers...

The eye came to life as the light reflected off the giant window.



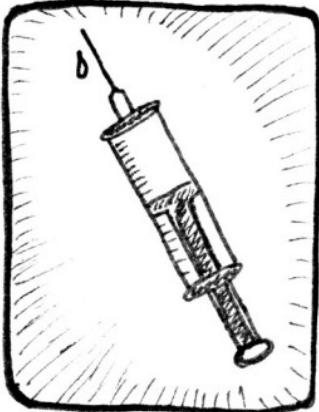
Punky flew into a RAGE. Everything began to move very fast.



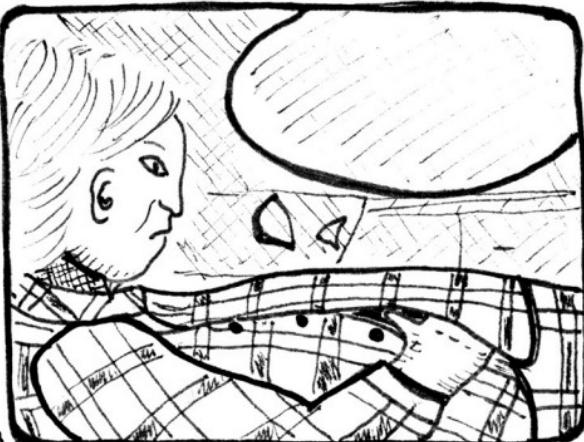


Punk was
a wild
TORNADO
OF
FURY

More staff
rushed in,
got her in
a "hold", and
hauled her
away, naked
+ screaming.



Alone in the room, I
emerged from hiding,
closed the door and
put on my pajamas.
I sat, numb for a
moment, before I
peeked outside.



They'd taken
Punk to a
room
beyond



the nurses station, where the kids
couldn't hear. Nearly every door was open,
kids peeking to see who was "acting out" this time.



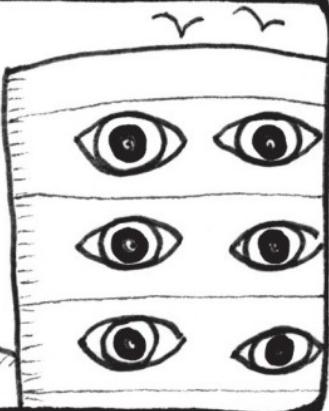
I shut the door + got into
bed. A dull numbness
sunk in. I laid still and
quiet, pretending to be
asleep when the nurse
came in to check on me.

**WAKE
YOUNG LADY!!
UP
GET DRESSED
+ GO STRAIGHT
TO MY OFFICE!!**

Dr. Rat Shit
was my first
human contact
the next morning.

I noticed that:

1. his eyes protruded like the windows
2. Punky hadn't returned.





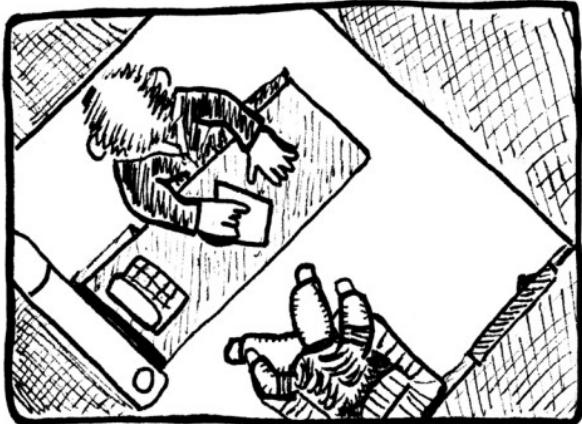
You'll be in a
SOLITARY ROOM
until I can be sure
you won't be
FORCING YOURSELF
onto other patients!



Listening to Dr. RatShit relate the tale Punky had spun for them, about how I'd forced her to have sex with me, a wave of sadness moved through my hands and then through the rest of me.

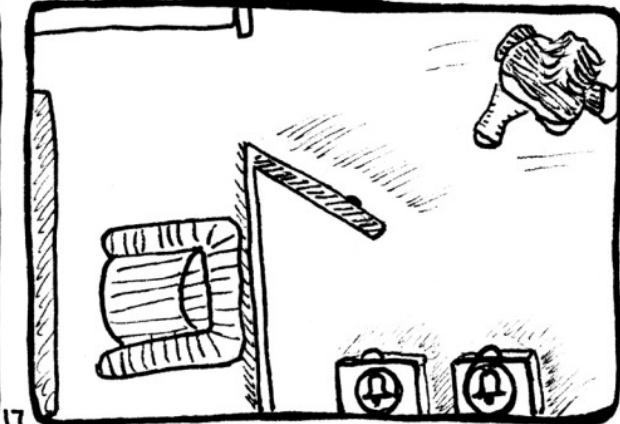
16



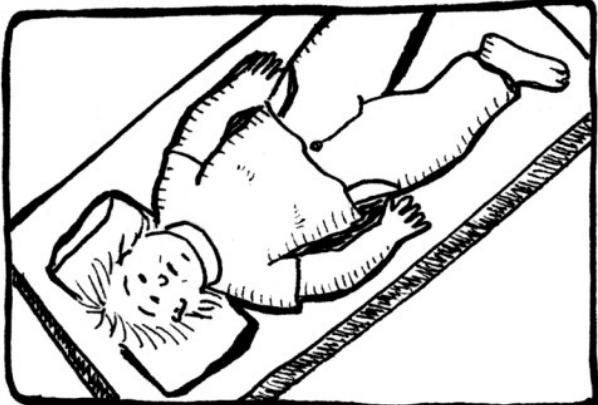
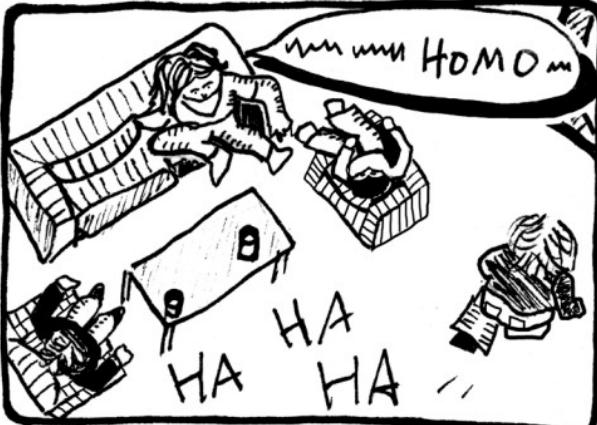


I floated up
and up
and gazed down at myself,
the doctor, the tiny
square room, so tiny...

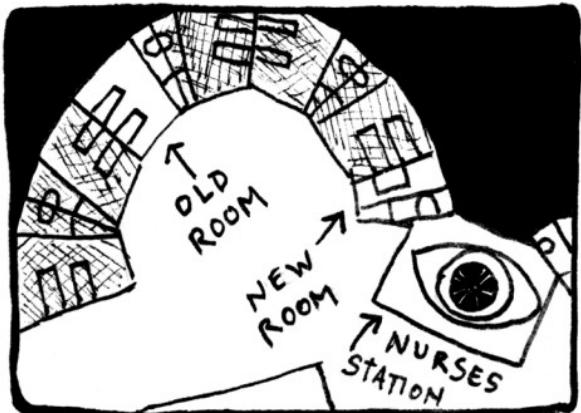
I followed myself
as I wandered back
toward my room
to gather my
things.



I watched myself notice Punky in the common space talking to some girls, them laughing, me looking away.

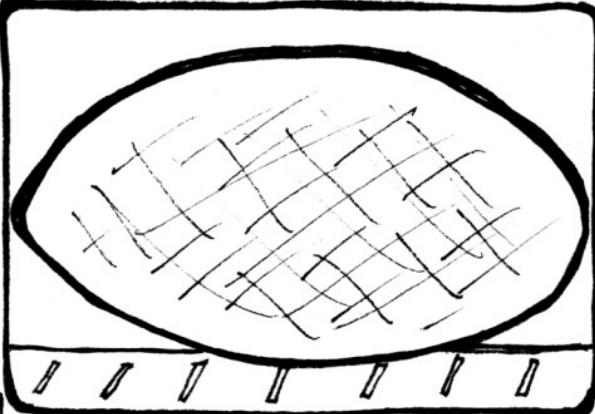


Inside the SINGLE ROOM, I began to regain contact with myself, my body on the bed, my head on the pillow.



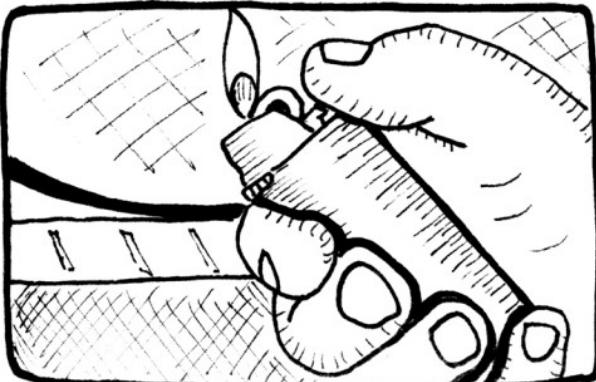
It was smaller than the double room. Everything else was the same: wide wooden door, with a smooth rectangular handle, tiny bathroom, and scarred, concave oval window opposite the door.

Even the view
was the same.



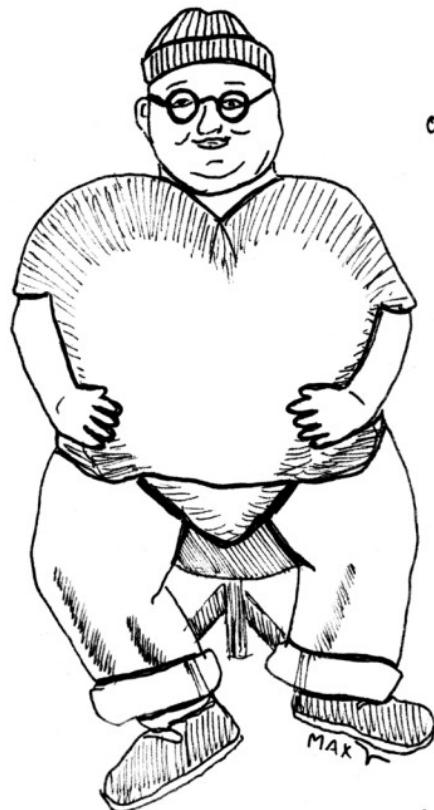
Leaning against the box
vent beneath the window,
I reached into my pocket.
I wrapped my fingers around
the smooth, familiar shape.

I pulled it out ...

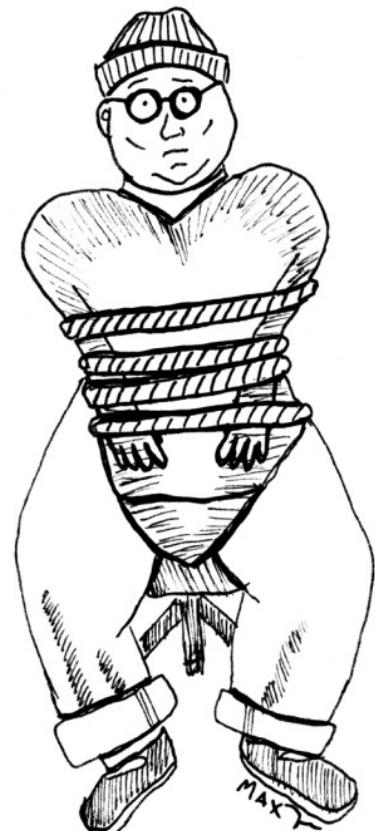


... and began
my
ESCAPE.

to be continued



OPEN / SHUT



maxairborne@gmail.com